

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein,  
Chairman  
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madame Chairman:

As a coalition of National Park friends groups and other supporters from California, we thank you for your leadership on behalf of these irreplaceable American assets. We especially appreciate your work to include a substantial increase in funding for park operations in your FY 2008 Interior Appropriations bill. We are writing to request your support for passage of the Centennial Challenge bill.

We strongly endorse efforts underway in Congress to establish the Centennial Challenge, in commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Park Service. This program will help ensure the parks are prepared for their next century by leveraging a new federal financial commitment with even greater philanthropic support for the parks. We believe that this Centennial Challenge will re-engage the American people to recognize and appreciate these places of our shared natural, historic and cultural heritage.

As you know, on August 23, Secretary Kempthorne and National Park Service Director Bomar unveiled an exciting set of programs and projects with substantial private support ready to kick-off the Centennial Challenge. Many projects and programs will greatly benefit Californians who visit and enjoy the parks in our state, as well as the industries and communities that depend on these parks for their economic vitality. Yosemite, Golden Gate, Santa Monica, Mojave, Manzanar, Point Reyes, Redwood and Lava Beds all have eligible projects with philanthropic support that would be triggered by this program.

The proposal enjoys broad bipartisan support as well as the enthusiastic endorsement of community and park leaders. The House of Representatives included \$50 million to initiate the Centennial Challenge in its FY 2008 Interior Appropriations Bill under existing authority. While the hearings just before the August recess in both the House and Senate authorizing committees signaled a strong commitment to enact the Centennial Challenge, given the short time before the end of the current fiscal year, it is highly unlikely the authorizing legislation can be passed and signed into law in the next several months. Therefore, we ask for your support and help to ensure that the \$50 million appropriation to begin the Centennial Challenge this year that was passed by the House remain in the final FY 2008 Interior Appropriations Bill.

Again, thank you for continuing to make the National Parks a priority. We look forward to working with you on this historic opportunity on their behalf.